

CHILDREN'S MUSEUM NEWS

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART
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THE MAN WITH THE WINE GLASS

VELASQUEZ

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

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DIEGO RODRIGUEZ DE SILVA Y VELASQUEZ is a very long name, but Spaniards always have long names. Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velasquez became as great as his name was long; in fact, he was very great. He was a painter of portraits which were almost as alive as the people who posed for them. The king of Spain kept him busy during most of his life. But Diego Rodriguez de Silva y Velasquez is too long a name to repeat often. Let us call this painter just Velasquez, and pronounce it as if it were spelled Vale-ath-keth. Perhaps you would like to know why he was so great. You will find some of the reasons in this picture which is reproduced here. But first let us learn something about his life.

When Velasquez was only a young man he was ordered to the city of Madrid to paint a portrait of the king, who had heard of his splendid painting. When the picture was finished the king was so pleased with it that he gave Velasquez money enough to move his family to Madrid so that, living there, he could be the court painter.

The king often visited Velasquez's studio. Sometimes he posed for a picture. These paintings do not always show him in his court robes, for occasionally Velasquez painted him in his hunting clothes, with his dog, or his horse. Many times the king ordered Velasquez to paint the little prince, and the golden-haired princess, too. And because he was the court artist Velasquez even painted the dwarfs and buffoons and jesters who were kept by the king to entertain himself and his family.

In spite of all the fine portraits which he made, Velasquez was forgotten after his death, and for two hundred years his pictures were hardly noticed. At last someone, seeing a few of his canvases recognized that they were masterpieces of painting. During more recent years Velasquez has been called the "painter's painter" because many artists have studied his pictures closely in order to improve their own art.

Velasquez was a realist. By that we mean that he painted people and things to look as nearly as possible like the real ones. When he was still a pupil, working in the studio of one of the older Spanish artists he made careful drawings of old jars, of fruits and flowers, of even fish and birds, to train himself to put down exactly what he saw. And because he wanted to be able to paint faces well, he hired a peasant boy to be his servant and his model, and drew him in every mood. This kind of study taught Velasquez what to look for, as well as what to put down on his canvas.

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Perhaps it was during the visit to Madrid, when Velasquez was first ordered to paint the king's portrait, that he also painted a picture of one of the court jesters, Pablillos de Valladolid. The picture has since been called *The Man with the Wine Glass*. Today it hangs in the Toledo Museum of Art. When you have looked at it closely you will agree that Velasquez was a realist.

There is a merry expression in the laughing face of the jester. After observing it for a few minutes you, too, will want to laugh, although you will never know what the jester said to Velasquez that made them both so gay. Even while Velasquez was enjoying the jester he did not forget to notice, and to paint, the reflections of light on the wrinkled forehead, along the sharply pointed nose, and on the glossy black hair.

The figure has been placed a little to one side of the center of the canvas so that, with the arm extended, there is perfect balance. Can you find, on the illustration, the small white ravelling where the sleeve joins the arm hole? Cover it with your finger and see if you still think the balance is perfect. It is surprising, isn't it, that a single small light line against the dark area can affect the balance so greatly.

There are also other splendid parts of the picture, such as the gloved hand holding the glass of wine. No doubt Velasquez learned how to paint clear glasses filled with deep red-brown wine when he was still a student. How well he has suggested a hand within the soft, smooth glove, filling the fingers almost to the tips; and with

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what care he painted the lights and shadows on it. The long pointed cuff with its red tassel has a very important part in the design of the picture. Perhaps you will remember that many times in these stories in the Children's Museum News we have mentioned the importance of repeated shapes, lines, or colors in making an harmonious design. See if you can find how many times Velasquez used this pointed shape in his picture. When you have found all that you can, look at the illustration which has the dark lines marking this shape.

The other illustration has marked on it the series of rhythmic or accented curves which Velasquez used to make our eyes travel over the figure. Perhaps they are responsible for much of the feeling that the jester is about to move his arm, or turn his head, or even stand up and walk away. Certainly these lines indicate to us what a splendid designer Velasquez was.

The real painting in the Museum is, of course, much lovelier than this reproduction can show. When you come to the Museum to see it, you will enjoy the colors, for in this painting Velasquez has used a harmony of yellows and red-oranges darkened to almost brown. The figure wears a dark green suit with a soft white lace collar. Against the greyed yellow wall, leaning forward and raising his glass slightly as he laughs, he makes a fine picture of a Spanish court jester, painted by one of the greatest of all the Spanish painters.

CHILDREN'S MUSIC CLASSES

THIS year there will be three different Museum music classes, all meeting on Saturday morning. Boys and girls who have attended the music classes in the Museum for at least two years and who have received the arm band of a Museum Guild Member will be eligible for the first group. It will be called the Advanced Class, and members must be eleven years or older. This class will meet on Saturday mornings at nine o'clock in Room 213.

The Intermediate Class, meeting in the Lecture Hall at ten o'clock, is to be made up of children who have attended the music classes at least one year, and who are at least eight years of age.

At eleven o'clock the First Year Music Class will meet. Children who have never come to Museum music classes before and who are younger than nine years are invited to join this group. This class will be held in Room 213 and the first meeting will be on Saturday morning, October fifth.

Mrs. Van Doren and Miss Macomber will meet all those wishing to join the classes on the first Saturday morning in October.